

City of La Crescent, MN

Downtown La Crescent

Vision and Strategic Plan

Adopted
December 18, 2017



A future view of Main Street, looking east from Oak Street

Civic Space, Streetscaping & Parking
Catalytic Development Projects
City Actions to Achieve the Vision



Planning for the La Crescent Downtown of the Future

Planning Summary

The plan is recommended by the La Crescent Planning Commission with the active participation of the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Commission.

The Commission and Council recognize the importance of a general plan to guide development. The concepts of density, downtown housing, street profiles, traffic patterns, concentration of commercial development in a single Central Business District, parking policy and parking locations, replacement of the city hall and its potential location, bike trail “take-off” over the highway, gathering places and commercial uses are directions guiding policy and action.

The success of local businesses and their support for the plan are essential to the success of the downtown. The City will actively support their growth and success. Specific city actions outlined in the plan include property acquisition, design of street reconstruction and actively working with developers on specific parcels and projects. Land and development projects consistent with the plan will be favored while also acknowledging that this plan is dynamic and can be modified to reflect new realities and opportunities.

This plan is adopted “as an adjunct to the comprehensive Plan” providing additional detail and specific actions consistent with that plan.



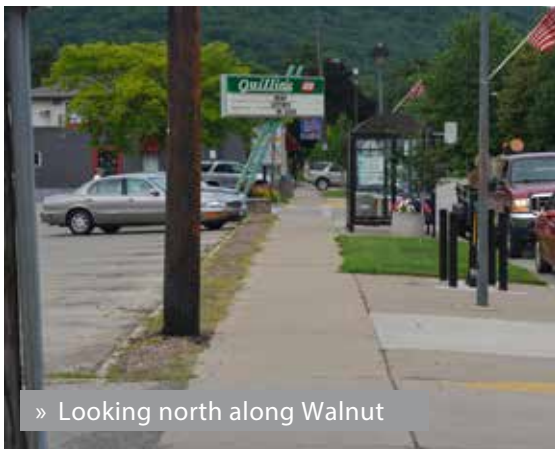
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ABOUT THIS PLAN

INTRODUCTION

A vibrant community requires a vibrant downtown, a place where people interact and find desired services and activities. In creating the City's Comprehensive Plan, La Crescent residents identified downtown enhancements as critical to attracting and retaining families in our community.

This plan is an extension of the City of La Crescent Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2016, which established many of the ideas illustrated here based on an extensive process of community discussion and engagement. The detailed conceptual images and action steps here improve the City's ability to facilitate public and private investment in the downtown.

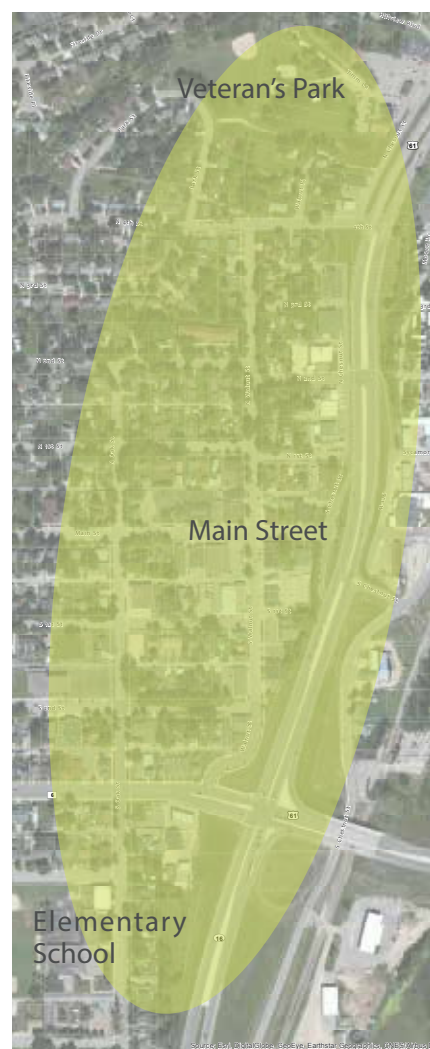
As specific projects come forward, whether public or private, they will be subject to additional community discussion and scrutiny. That process may lead to new perspectives and different outcomes than envisioned in this plan.

The intent of this plan is that it helps the citizens of La Crescent, business owners and developers envision positive change in La

Crescent and get excited about that change. Successful downtown revitalization requires public and private collaboration, and public enthusiasm for change is an important ingredient in that collaborative process. This plan should give property owners and developers the confidence to propose change.

*...this plan helps
everyone envision
positive change and
get excited about
that change...*

The study area for this downtown plan extends from Veteran's Park at the north to the Elementary School at the south, and it includes sites east of highway 14/61 and west of Oak Street. While some people may think of "downtown" as just a few blocks of Main Street and Walnut Street, the success of that downtown core depends upon public and private investments in the wider area illustrated at right.



The study area for this plan

TEN KEY IDEAS

INTRODUCTION

1 This vision incorporates new development and also, importantly, more development. Vibrance will be achieved through MORE RESIDENTIAL UNITS that will help provide market support for more commercial activity. La Crescent is in a good location within the wider metropolitan area to attract development.

2 PUBLIC PARKING is important to the vision, to enable more efficient use of limited land and help make the downtown core a great place for walking. More development will require more public parking.

3 Small sites are hard to redevelop, and large sites are hard to create. The City can and should ASSIST WITH PROPERTY ACQUISITION to help create larger sites.

4 Downtown redevelopment requires collaboration. The City should ACT AS A PARTNER IN REDEVELOPMENT projects, helping to solve problems and overcome obstacles for existing and new businesses.

5 This City can demonstrate its commitment to the downtown and set the bar for quality development with a NEW CITY HALL.

6 The long-planned BIKE BRIDGE AND TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS at its “take-off” at the east end of S. 1st St. will improve linkages between the downtown and the river, both physically and perceptually.

7 Downtown should be A PLACE TO GATHER AND SOCIALIZE, especially outdoors. Deeper sidewalks that enable more street trees and outdoor seating will encourage this.

8 IMPROVEMENTS TO DOWNTOWN ACCESS POINTS will improve traffic flow and awareness of downtown La Crescent.

9 The City’s COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP should be on full display in downtown projects, including solar power systems, methods of stormwater infiltration, energy-efficient buildings and lighting, and ample bike parking.

10 THIS WON’T BE EASY, OR FAST. It will require sustained community vision, community action, and public investment. It is essential that City and business community leaders review this plan annually and commit to specific efforts.

PLANNING PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

This Vision and Strategic Plan builds upon work and policies in the City of La Crescent Comprehensive Plan, adopted in September 2016. The purpose of this Vision and Strategic Plan is to suggest actions that can help implement the Comprehensive Plan. That Comprehensive Plan includes a series of Goals and Objectives in service to the following *Downtown Enhancement Vision Statement*, describing Downtown La Crescent as the City desires it to be in the year 2035:

“The Downtown area is thriving, with activity from morning to evening. A series of new buildings and uses have brought energy to the community and strengthened the “downtown” character while retaining a small town feel. Streetscape improvements, including more trees, planting beds, corner bumpouts and crosswalks have defined the downtown area and made it a very pleasant place to visit and walk around. Downtown is recognized as a central “trailhead” for river and bluff adventures, with convenient parking and safe walking and biking connections to popular parks and trails.”

This Downtown Vision is an extension of the Comprehensive Plan, offering details and images to establish a stronger shared vision for the future of the downtown.

Policy content from the Comprehensive Plan is carried forward and cited as appropriate throughout this plan.

The Comprehensive Plan includes six general goals for the Downtown Area, listed at right.

Each goal is accompanied by objectives and strategies, which get to more detailed outcomes and methods of implementation.

The presentation of this Vision and Strategic Plan is part of a process that is subject to consideration and review by many elements of the community including residents, businesses and civic and community organizations, and the City government which has approval authority for many of the needed actions. Some of the plans discussed in this Vision and Strategic Plan may be preliminary in detail, but they represent the kinds of steps that must be taken to implement the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

1 New development on Main Street and Walnut Street in the Downtown Core will have urban character appropriate to La Crescent

2 Downtown streetscaping will be improved to define and enhance the downtown character and identity

3 The downtown district will be apparent and accessible to visitors from all directions

4 Downtown activity and retail/service market demand will be increased through the development of more residential units in the downtown area

5 Parking will remain convenient and free in the downtown area

6 Downtown will be recognized locally and regionally as the civic and commercial heart of the La Crescent community

PUBLIC INPUT

INTRODUCTION



A few of the participants in the downtown walkabout explore the interface between the downtown and Highway 14/61 in the waning November light.

The planning process for this Downtown Vision builds upon the work of the Minnesota Design Team visit in 1997, and a year of work on the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2016. Many of the ideas in this plan come directly from the work of the Downtown and Economic Development subcommittee that prepared the Downtown Enhancement section of the Comprehensive Plan. That work and those ideas incorporate feedback from hundreds of residents who took community surveys and attended public meetings.

This planning process included the following events:

Walkabout and Public Forum November 17, 2016 City Hall

About 60 people attended this event. It started with a walking tour of the downtown area, facilitated in two groups by MSA planners. Participants observed and discussed street and building conditions throughout the downtown, and collected several pictures and measurements of street and sidewalks widths.

After a break for pizza, MSA facilitated a group discussion about strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for change (see the following page).

Preliminary Draft Public Meeting February 22, 2017 Community Building

About 60 people attended this event, across two sessions. MSA presented and explained a series of posters describing streetscape and redevelopment ideas, and then answered questions and engaged in conversations, both with the entire group and with individuals in an open house format. Attendees provided written comments which were compiled for internal use to

guide revisions and refinements to the concepts.

Joint City Council, Planning Commission Meeting April 24, 2017 City Hall

At a joint meeting of City Council and Planning Commission, MSA made a brief presentation of critical issues in the draft plan concepts and reviewed feedback from the February meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to identify any critical concerns or roadblocks to plan approval.

Joint Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission (EDC) Meeting June 5, 2017 Community Building

The Planning Commission Chair and EDC reviewed the downtown plan and identified edits to emphasize both the importance of the vision to spur projects and the need for further review and vetting as projects are proposed.

Other Meetings

This plan and its concepts were also reviewed and discussed at meetings of the La Crescent Planning Commission in April and May 2017.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM THE NOVEMBER 2016 MEETING

STRENGTHS/OPPORTUNITIES

- » Views of bluffs and marsh
- » New buildings on Walnut (architecture/landscape, relationship to the street)
- » Angled parking
- » Landscaping at Hwy 61 and S 3rd St.
- » Character of Corky's and La Crescent Animal Care buildings
- » Use of brick on buildings and within the landscape
- » Opportunity to remove parking on either side of AcenTek
- » Redevelopment Opportunity: Parcels along Walnut with river valley views (e.g. Apple Blossom and Wieser Building), for mixed-use (first floor commercial/residential above)
- » Redevelopment Opportunity: Commodore property
- » Redevelopment Opportunity: Parcels adjacent to Kwik Trip (commercial)
- » Redevelopment Opportunity: Elementary School (residential)
- » Relocation of City Hall: adjacent to fire station
- » The amount of open space/terraces

WEAKNESSES/THREATS

- » Visibility around parked cars, specifically in front of Snap Fitness
- » Mixed parking configurations (perpendicular, parallel and angled)
- » Corner parking lots at Main and Walnut
- » Lack of marked crosswalks

- » Lack of clarity/signage for visitors on how to find Downtown
- » Existing buildings that lack character
- » Lack of night life
- » Parallel parking along Walnut across from the newly landscaped area/park
- » Street yard parking (bank)
- » Property tax structure for business owners
- » Public parking is not identified
- » Pedestrian safety at intersections, due to wide streets and poor visibility around parked cars
- » Multiple blind spots: alley adjacent to Quillin's
- » Pedestrian safety crossing Hwy 61 and S 3rd St.
- » Technology trends that may further reduce the need for retail banks, post offices, even grocery stores.

WANTS

- » Wi-Fi hang out
- » Coffee house
- » Bowling alley
- » Farmers Market (note the City currently has a farmer's market)
- » Decorative lighting
- » Amenities: Benches, bicycle racks, trash receptacles etc.
- » More landscaping
- » Improved crosswalks

QUESTIONS RAISED

- » Can the City explore purchasing parcels/properties that are for sale?
- » What kind of incentives are available to get the project types we want? (Legacy money?)
- » How do we capture those traveling through La Crescent to stop here?
- » Why do people want to come here?
- » How do we leverage our scenery and connection to outdoor recreation?
- » What is our catalyst for change?
- » Where could we create a central gathering spaces or public plaza?
- » What niche business can we attract?
- » How do we guide façade improvements?
- » What in this town will attract residents who grew up here to reside here after college?
- » How do we capitalize on our recreational assets?
- » How can we make more efficient use of building space?
- » How do we get more active uses into our storefronts?
- » How tall can our buildings be?
- » How should downtown grow?
- » What is the connection from the convention center to downtown?
- » What can we do to improve the backside of buildings facing the freeway?
- » What is the impact on our business district if our school is not upgraded? (implies families will not located here)
- » How do we attract and retain people?
- » How do we bring bicyclists downtown?

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CIVIC SPACES

PUBLIC REALM

One of the ideas established by the City of La Crescent Comprehensive Plan is that the downtown will continue to be an important part of community life, not only as a center of commerce but also as the center of civic activity.

Goal 6

Downtown will be recognized locally and regionally as the civic and commercial heart of the La Crescent community.

Strategies

- 6.1. Key civic buildings will continue to be located in the downtown core, including City Hall and the library.
- 6.2. The Downtown core will retain its identity and function as the heart of the Central Business District.
- 6.3. When developing new civic buildings downtown, incorporate a small public gathering space that incorporates art, places to sit, and ample landscaping.
- 6.4. Use downtown streets for community events in every season, including parades, recreation events, car shows, arts festivals, etc.

The City's current City Hall and Police Station building is cramped, poorly configured to serve its many functions, and a poor reflection of the quality of the La Crescent community. A new City Hall would be an important and visible commitment to the future of La Crescent in general, and downtown specifically. If we're not willing to invest here, why would others?

*...if we're not willing
to invest here,
why would others?*

This Downtown Vision Plan considers several possible downtown locations for a new Municipal Building, as illustrated in the map of Catalytic Redevelopment Sites on page 32. The preferred site is at the southeast corner of Main St. and Oak St.

As discussed and confirmed with Planning Commission and City Council, this site is preferred because of its proximity to the La Crescent Community Building, enabling a direct connection to meeting spaces in that facility and elevator access

to its upper floor. This location for City Hall also reinforces Main Street as a civic space, consistent with the occasional closure of the street for public events.

This Municipal Building would house City Hall functions, the Police Department, and the Library. It also offers the opportunity to lease space to other public entities that operate in the La Crescent area, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



New civic buildings downtown



Use of the street for public events

This plan proposes redevelopment of the entirety of the south side of Main Street between Walnut Street and Oak Street. The east end (current Quillin's site) would feature a multi-story commercial and residential building, and the west end would be the new Municipal Building. Between those two uses, instead of another building, a mid-block public gathering space is proposed.

As illustrated at right, this space would extend out into the street in place of some on-street parking, and there would be more parking behind this space, accessed from the alley. The space could incorporate a mix of seating ledges, lawn areas, benches, trees, planter basins that filter and infiltrate stormwater, and even an interactive water feature, making it a popular summer stop for families. The east end of this space, adjoining the new commercial building, could feature a cafe seating area.

The goal of this "Main Street Square" public space is to create a "destination", a place that compels people to look around, take pictures, and come back to with friends because it is attractive, unique and fun.

Main Street Square - Concept Plan



Main Street Square - Character Images



Unique seating and raised lawn terraces



Interactive water feature



Bio-infiltration terrace with curb cut



Main Street Square Concept - looking west from the cafe seating area



Main Street Square Concept - looking west along the sidewalk

FINDING DOWNTOWN

PUBLIC REALM

The location of Downtown La Crescent is not readily apparent to visitors. The Comprehensive Plan addresses the need for wayfinding improvements with the following goal and strategies.

Goal 3

The downtown district will be apparent and accessible to visitors from all directions.

Strategies

- 3.1. *Improve signage identifying access to downtown, especially from the north.*
- 3.2. *Ensure that the pedestrian bridge of 14/61, when designed, is architecturally attractive and serves as a marker of downtown's location.*

As illustrated in the map on the next page, a pedestrian bridge across Hwy 14/61 is planned, providing safe access to the Wagon Wheel Trail and the Mississippi River.

Also under consideration in 2017 is a set of improvements to Veteran's Park at the north edge of the downtown area, and a trail route through that park up to Eagles Bluff Park. The Comprehensive Plan proposes outdoor recreation as a centerpiece of the local identity and economy,

and it presents the downtown area is the City's trailhead, where people will start and finish their hiking and biking explorations, with convenient access to rest rooms, retail shops and restaurants. Maps on the following pages show the proposed Veteran's Park improvements and a concept for a multi-use La Crescent Blufflands Trail ringing the City.

The map on the next page also identifies intersections to be improved as part of this project, in the interest of making the downtown easier to find and navigate safely by any mode of travel. The recommended improvements are described here, and most are also illustrated in the Streetscape Plan.

1) N. 4th St. and Walnut St.

N. 4th St. is one of the access routes to the downtown from Hwy 14/61, but traffic west of Walnut St. is a concern to residents. Options to manage through traffic on N. 4th St. include making it a three-way stop, adding a wayfinding sign directing people toward downtown, and a "local traffic only" sign facing westbound traffic.

2) N. 4th St. and US Hwy 14/61

This intersection should be emphasized as a main point of access to the downtown. It is currently unsafe due to the difficulty making

left turns onto the highway during heavy traffic and the awkward connection of N. Chestnut St. The intersection should be signalized and N. Chestnut realigned to connect with Walnut Place. These changes will improve safety and make nearby parcels more valuable to retailers.

3) Main St. and Oak St.

4) Main St. and Walnut St.

6) S. 1st St. and Walnut St.

7) S. 2nd St. and Walnut St.

As illustrated in the Streetscape Plan, these four intersections would get bumpouts and crosswalk improvements to enhance their appearance and pedestrian safety.

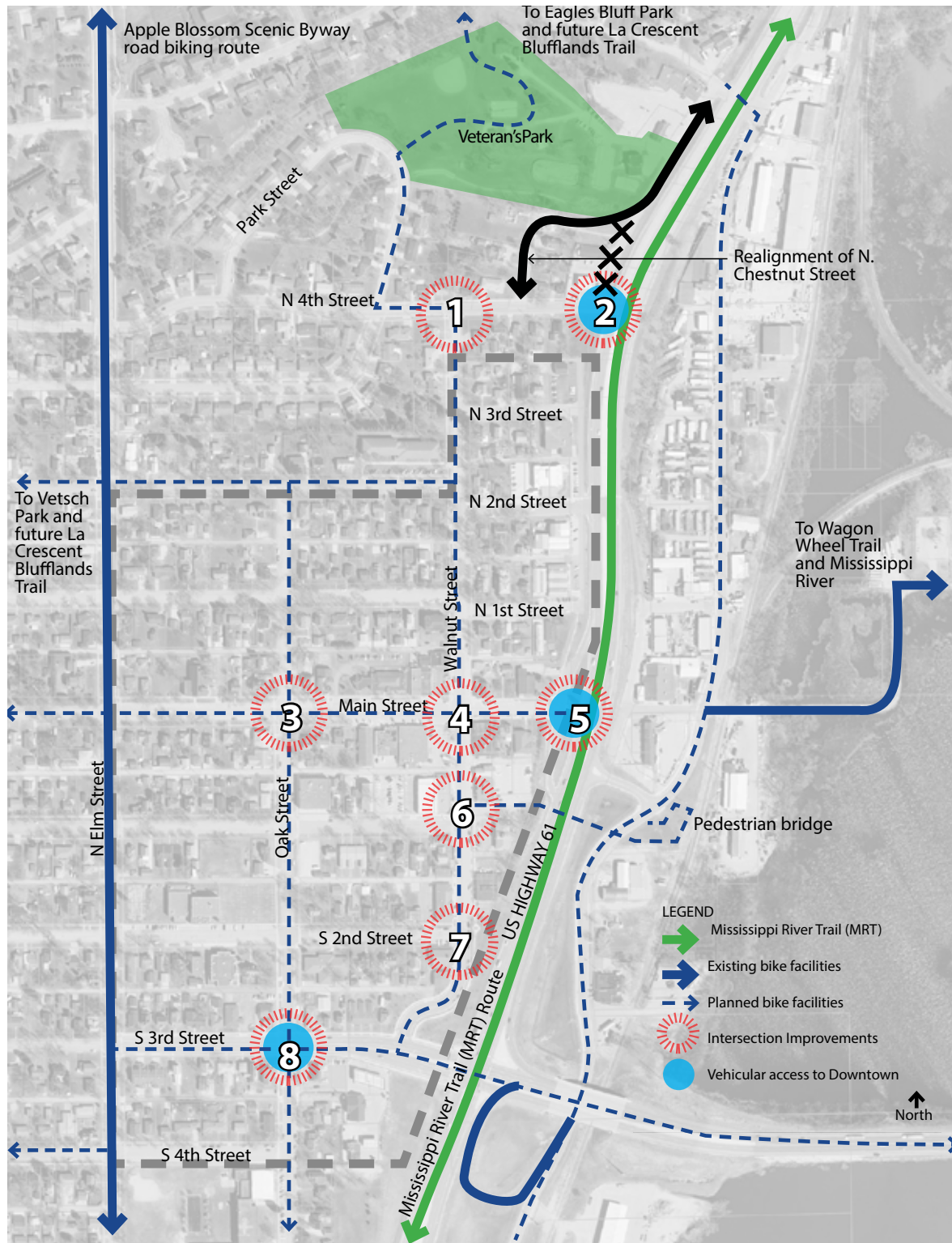
5) Main St. and US Hwy 14/61

This intersection should continue to be emphasized as a main point of access to the downtown and also to the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive. A unique paving pattern within the intersection is suggested.

8) S. 3rd St. and Oak St.

This intersection should be emphasized as a main point of access to the downtown, including a unique paving pattern and signs for eastbound and westbound traffic on S. 3rd St.

Trail Connectivity and Intersection Improvements Map*



*See also the 2017 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for additional transportation planning details

Wagon Wheel Trail - Proposed Trailhead and Bridge



The City has been working for several years toward the construction of a pedestrian bridge over Hwy 14/61. The “take-off” location where this bridge would connect to the downtown is the east end S. 1st St. This Downtown Vision Plan proposes the removal of that street to create a small green space plaza where the bridge lands, including benches, an overlook and an informational kiosk.

The illustration above incorporates plans for the adjoining parcel to the north, which would be redeveloped with a mixed use building and underground parking (see the next chapter for more information about this site). It should be noted that the bank has a drive access onto the far eastern end of S. 1st St. for use by the bank’s drive-up customers. If that drive-through use is still active when

the bridge is installed, it may be necessary and should be feasible to maintain this vehicle egress as a one-lane driveway along the south edge of the S. 1st St. right-of-way, close to the bank building. There should still be enough space north of that driveway for the trailhead features and a ramp to underground parking.

The pedestrian bridge has received partial funding as of 2017 and is programmed for construction in 2021.

Though use of the adjoining site for public parking is ideal, it would be acceptable to encourage trailhead parking in any public lot in the downtown area.

Wagon Wheel Trailhead - Character Images



Trail plaza with kiosk, trash receptacle, etc.



Unique gateway and or focal art feature showcasing scenic overview

Veterans Park - Master Plan



Veterans Park and the adjoining American Legion site are planned for an overhaul. Plans for the American Legion include a new hotel and an adjoining La Crescent Convention Center. The Convention Center will require adequate parking for meetings, weddings, etc., and so a substantial new parking area is proposed. The parking lot would displace the existing park shelter and playground, which would be replaced further west. The conceptual design shown here was drafted in May 2017 and was a starting point for engineering work in Fall 2017. Final design does not include a connection to Park Street.

A new playground near the shelter and ball fields will make this an attractive destination for families.

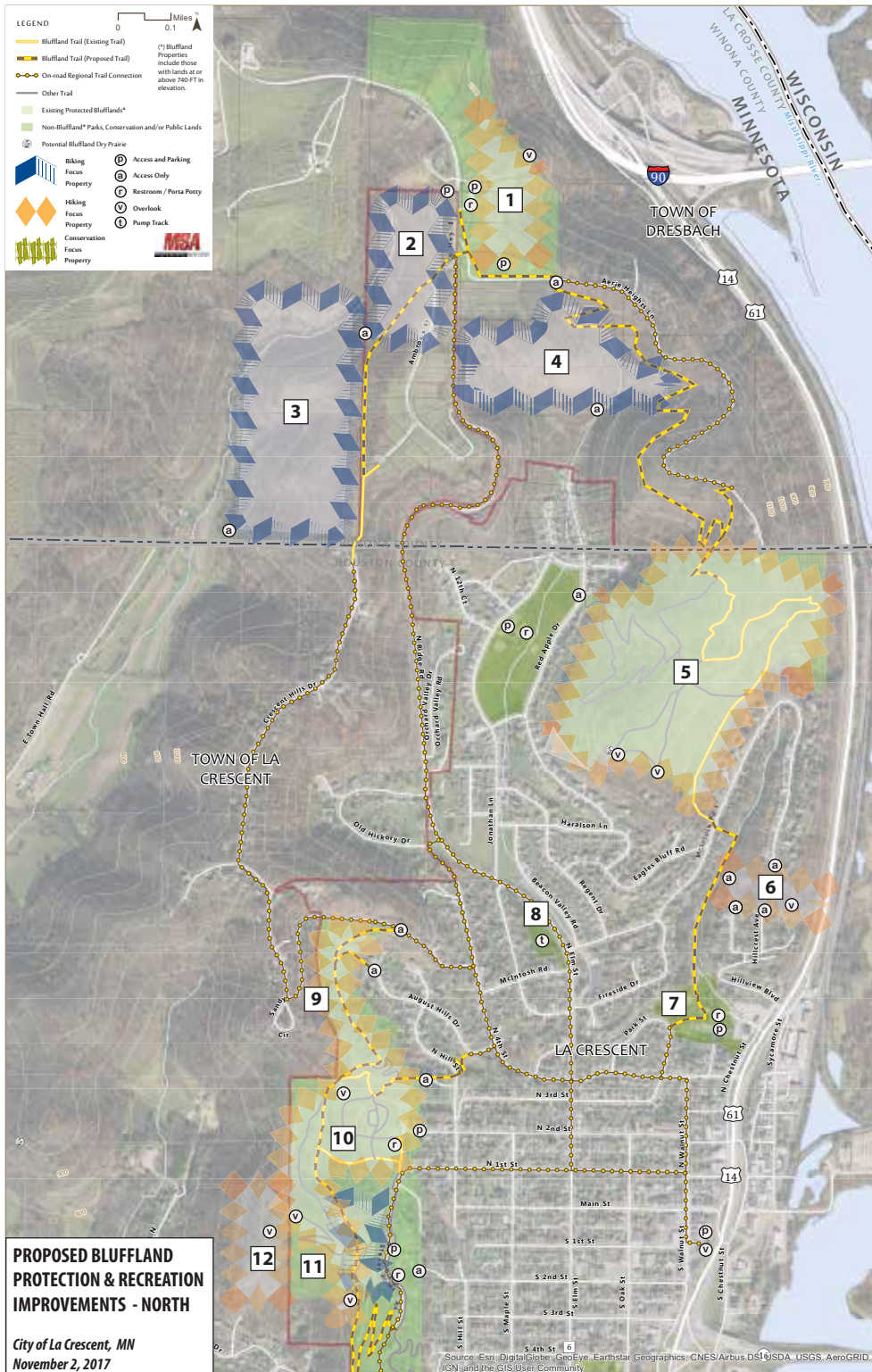
Veterans Park - Character Images



An attractive shelter could accommodate both informal events (e.g. picnics) and formal gatherings (e.g. weddings).



Proposed Blufflands Trail Connections (Excerpt from the La Crescent Blufflands Plan)



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STREETSCAPE PLAN

PUBLIC REALM

The Comprehensive Plan offers the following Goal and Strategies regarding downtown streetscaping.

Goal 2

Downtown streetscaping will be improved to define and enhance the downtown character and identity.

Strategies

- 2.1. *Improve key downtown streets with landscaping and corner bumpouts to slow traffic and reduce the pedestrian crossing distance. These changes should help to identify the core downtown area.*
- 2.2. *Keep downtown green with street trees, planting beds or grass, and/or planters.*
- 2.3. *Add dedicated bike parking racks throughout the downtown area.*
- 2.4. *Utilize public art to make the downtown area unique ("placemaking"). Consider art forms both conventional (e.g. sculpture) and unconventional (e.g. poetry in the sidewalks or artistic stormwater infrastructure). Include art in any public gathering spaces.*

This Downtown Vision Plan offers a set of ideas for how the downtown can become more unique and attractive, and a desirable place to spend time. The Streetscape Master Plan on the following pages illustrates, in plan view, section view and character images, how sidewalks could be widened, intersections narrowed, greenery added and art introduced to help breath new life into the downtown.

Some of the greenery areas can be planter boxes set below the level of the street, designed to filter stormwater runoff with water-tolerant plants.

The widened sidewalks include adequate space for "street furniture" amenities, including lighting, benches and bike racks. These should be installed in alignment with the proposed street trees, between the main walking zone and the curb.

If implemented, these changes will make downtown La Crescent dramatically more attractive and compelling as a place to explore on foot and enjoy a meal or a drink out on the sidewalk.



Bike racks



Benches



When selecting new lighting, a dark-sky compliant model such as this is encouraged, to prevent light trespass and sky glow. A traditional look can still be achieved. The lamp will use LED technology, for efficiency and longevity.

Streetscape - Master Plan



Streetscape - Character Images



Main Street with angled parking and raised planters



Streetscaping along Walnut Street



Opportunities for outdoor seating



Opportunity for stormwater management in biofiltration basins along Main Street



Landscaping at corners and along parking edges



Opportunity for stormwater management in biofiltration basins along Main Street



More of what makes La Crescent unique, nods to local brand, character



Opportunities for spontaneous social interactions with unique seating that could also be functional art



Seek opportunities to highlight local character through public art



Decorative intersections reinforcing the brand

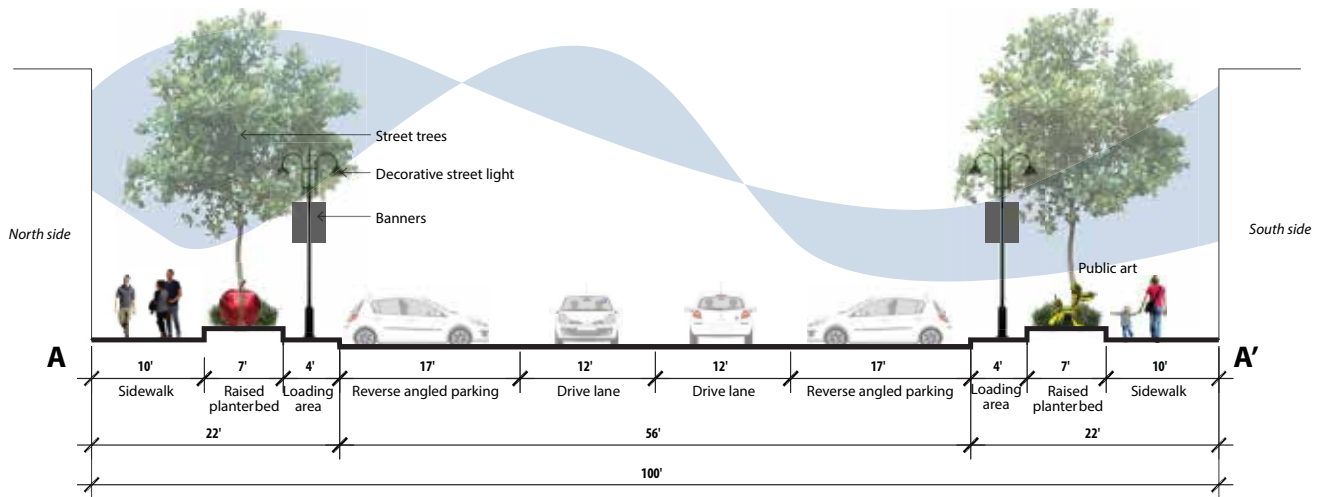


Unique gateway elements

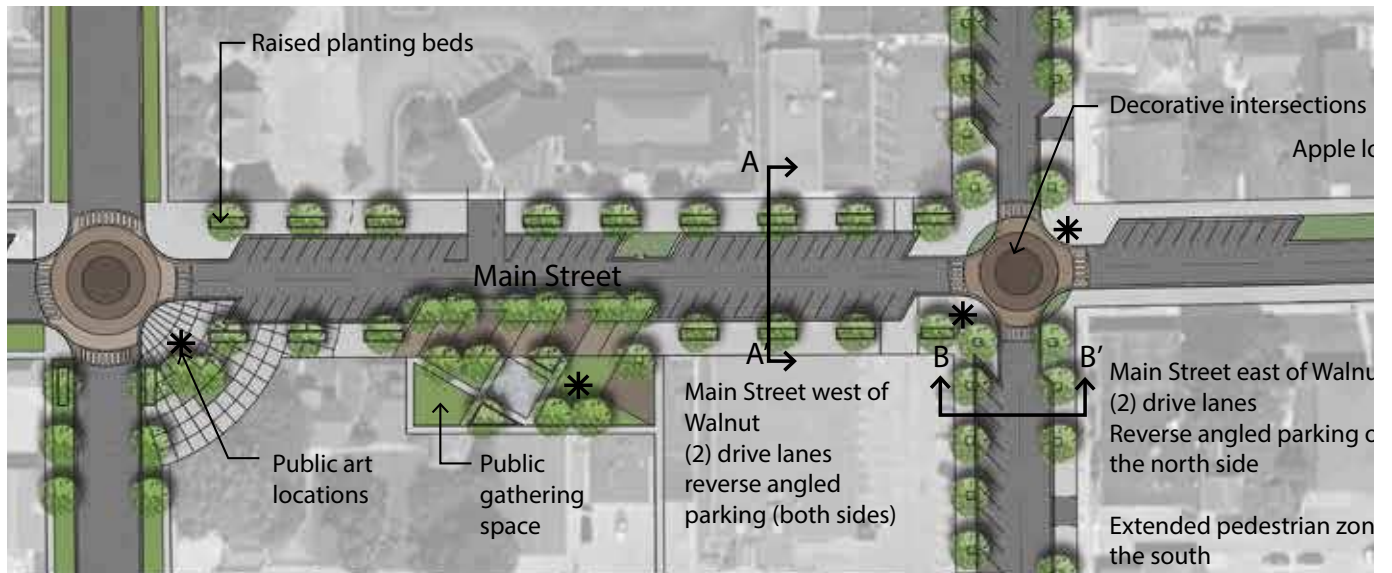
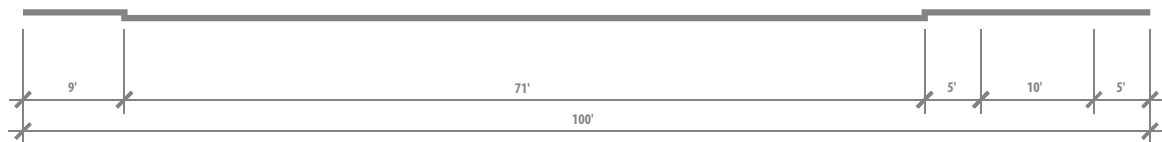


Unique paving in sidewalk and roadway

Main Street - Typical Section



Existing Section

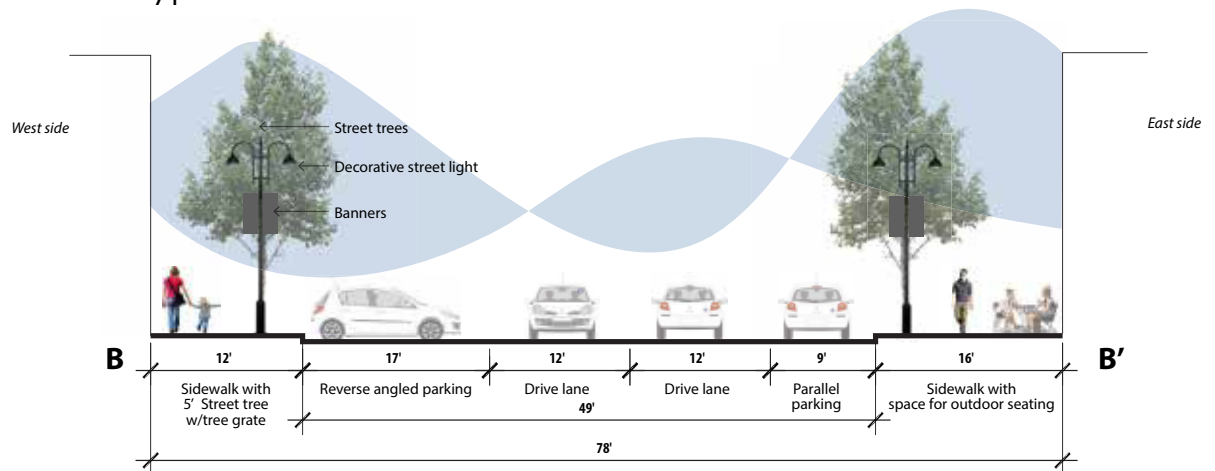


Main Street would feature narrower drive lanes, back-in angle parking, wide sidewalks, a mix of raised and sunken planter boxes (the latter for stormwater biofiltration), and

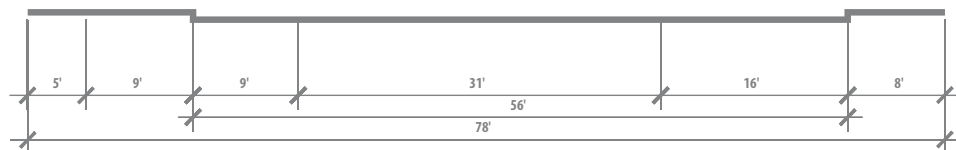
placemaking features such as a public green space and public art. There would be little or no driveway access from the street, instead relying upon alleys for parking and

service access while protecting the street frontage for development and pedestrian use.

Walnut Street - Typical Section



Existing Section

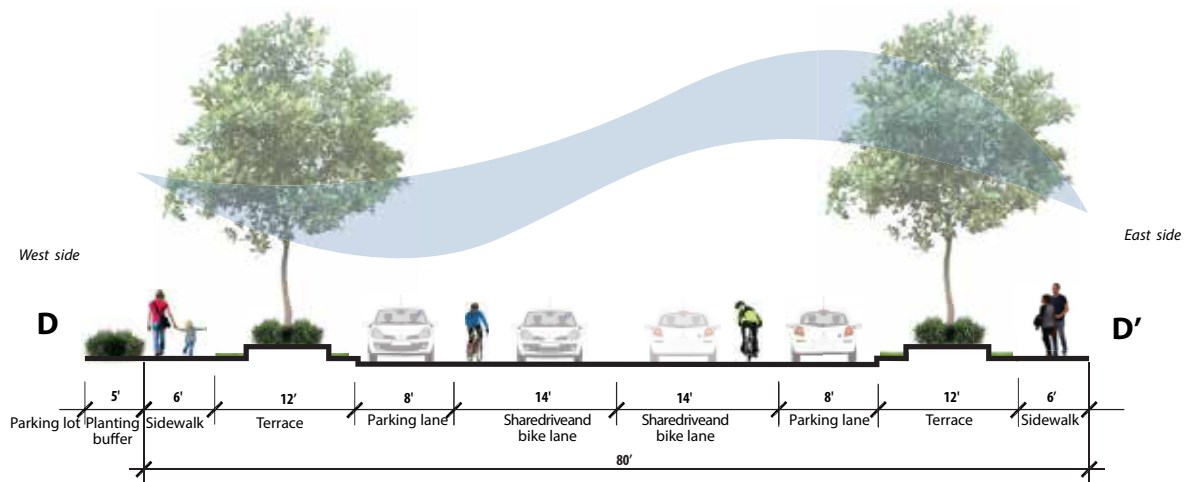


Walnut Street would feature a mix of angle parking and parallel parking, as it does today, while making the lanes narrower to provide a wider sidewalk and cafe seating opportunities on the east side of the street.

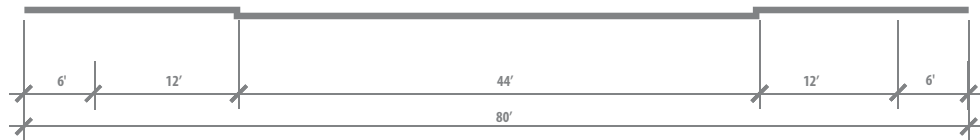
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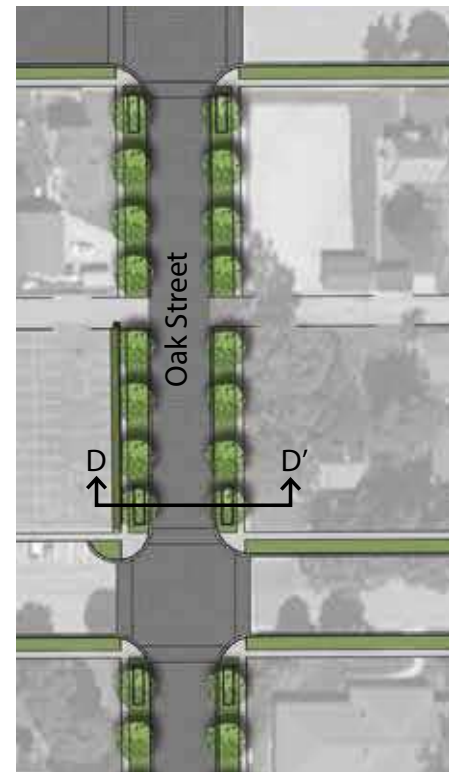
Oak Street - Typical Section



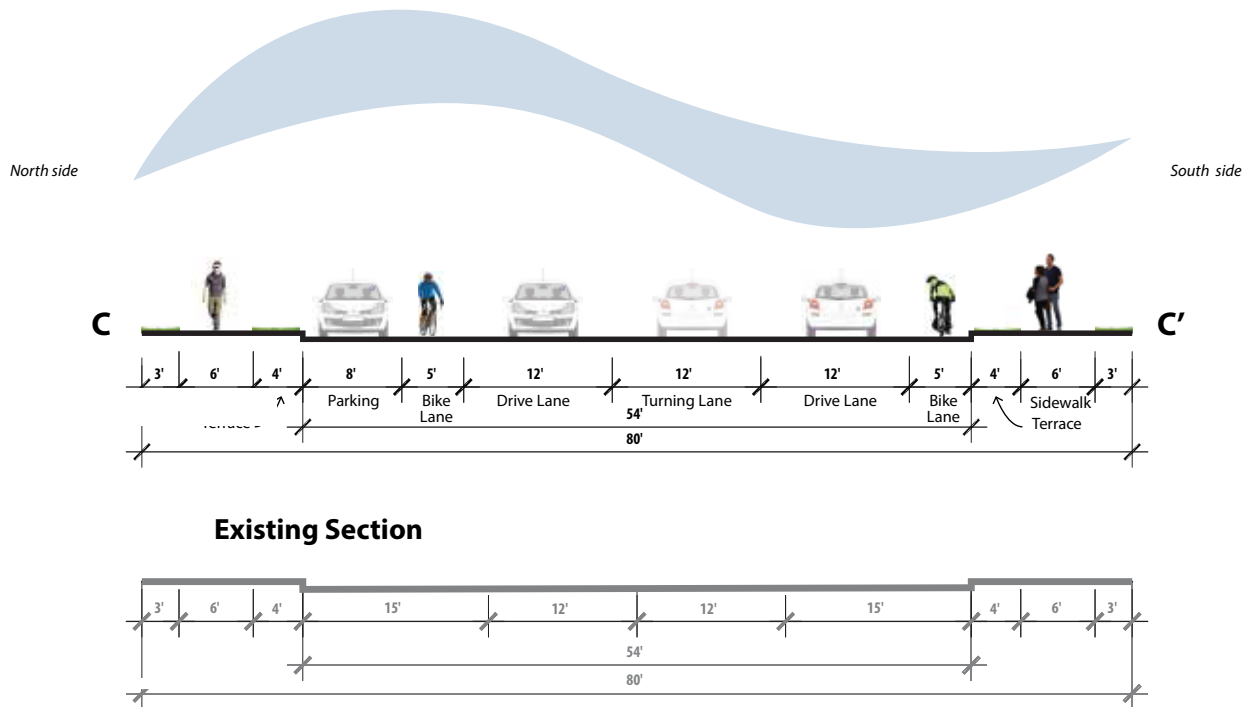
Existing Section



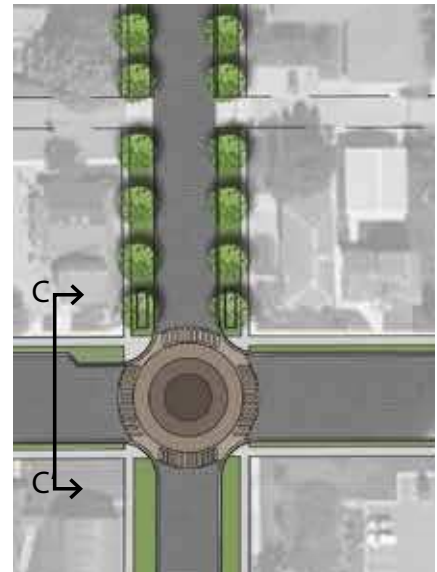
Oak Street would feature modest improvements within the existing pavement locations, including pavement markings to delineate parking lanes and sharing biking/driving lanes. Street trees should be planted at regular intervals from Main St. to S. 3rd St., and raised planter boxes are recommended at each corner, to extend that Main Street feature and help to identify Oak St. as a major point of entry to downtown. These boxes should each contain a tree and could be planted with perennials, annuals or simply grass.



S. Third Street - Typical Section



South 3rd Street would be re-stripped within the existing pavement, to add a parking lane on the north side and bike lanes in each direction. East of Oak St. the westbound curb lane would become a right turn lane for vehicles headed into downtown, and the curb would be bumped out on the west side of the intersection to reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians.



PARKING PLAN

PUBLIC REALM

The City of La Crescent Comprehensive Plan includes the following Goal, Objective and Strategies addressing the future of parking in the Downtown area.

Goal 5

Parking will remain convenient and free in the downtown area.

Objective

Customers will be able to find parking within one block of their final destination at most times.

Parking Strategies

5.1. The City will maintain as much on-street parking capacity as possible to reduce the need for off-street lots, including existing angle parking.

5.2. The City will improve existing public parking lots downtown, including pavement quality and signage. As opportunities arise, the City will acquire and reserve parcels for additional off-street public parking, typically at the edge of the urban core.

5.3. There will be routine reminders for downtown business

employees to reserve prime parking for customers by parking their own vehicles in secondary lots and streets.

5.4. Consider adding electric vehicle charging stations in City-owned lots as part of the City's commitment to reducing dependence on fossil fuels

This Downtown Vision Plan offers additional details regarding the first two strategies - maintaining on-street parking and expanding off-street parking.

On-Street Parking

As illustrated in the Streetscape Master Plan in this document, it is feasible to maintain diagonal parking while also increasing sidewalk widths as part of a full street reconstruction. La Crescent's streets are wide (most have 80 feet of right-of way, Main St. has 100 feet), and the travel lanes are currently wider than necessary. The amount of on-street parking can be increased wherever there is an opportunity to eliminate a driveway and instead rely upon alley access to any off-street parking area. The

Streetscape Master Plan shows a net increase in on-street parking on Main St. while widening sidewalks and also reserving space for a mid-block public plaza.

This Downtown Vision Plan incorporates back-in angle parking throughout the downtown area, an alternative finding application in many parts of the country, including St. James, Minnesota, population 4,500. Benefits of this alternative include:

- » Easier than parallel parking - drivers can back into the spot with one turn, as compared to the s-curve maneuver required for parallel parking.
- » Better visibility - unlike conventional angle parking, in which the driver often cannot see traffic before backing into the street, back-in parking allows the driver to control the lane when stopping to back into the space, and then a much clearer view and an easy movement when pulling out.
- » Safer unloading/loading - doors and tailgates open toward the sidewalk instead of the street.

Off-Street Parking

Many communities have no requirements for private, off-street parking in the downtown commercial core. Downtown areas were often established before the automobile age when there was no need for off-street parking lots, and it would not be possible to require parking today without destroying the existing urban form, with buildings close together and close to the street. But convenient parking is still a necessary amenity in most places, and communities meet this need by creating public parking lots and ramps.

La Crescent currently requires off-street parking downtown, and has a mixed-bag of current conditions including some public parking lots and some private parking lots. Of greatest concern are the private parking lots in front of buildings, because they push storefronts away from the street.

As illustrated on the following page, this Downtown Vision Plan proposes several new public parking sites throughout the downtown. Public parking is more efficient and better-utilized than private parking because it may be used by anyone that needs it. All public parking should be well-identified with standard signs, and they are opportunities to demonstrate the use of pervious pavement techniques to infiltrate more downtown stormwater.



This Downtown Vision Plan also proposes some changes to the City's zoning ordinance, as described in the box below. For commercial uses, the new standards would require more parking availability for commercial uses than the current standard, but also explicitly allow on-street and off-street public parking to count toward that requirement. For residential uses, the proposed standards would get somewhat stricter by requiring one covered parking space for every unit (garage or underground), with the intent of making those downtown housing units desirable in a region where enclosed parking is a highly-desired housing amenity. Additional on-site spaces would not be required for additional bedrooms, but access to other off-street parking options within a reasonable distance would need to be demonstrated.

DOWNTOWN PARKING STANDARDS - SUGGESTED AMENDMENT OF ZONING REQUIREMENTS

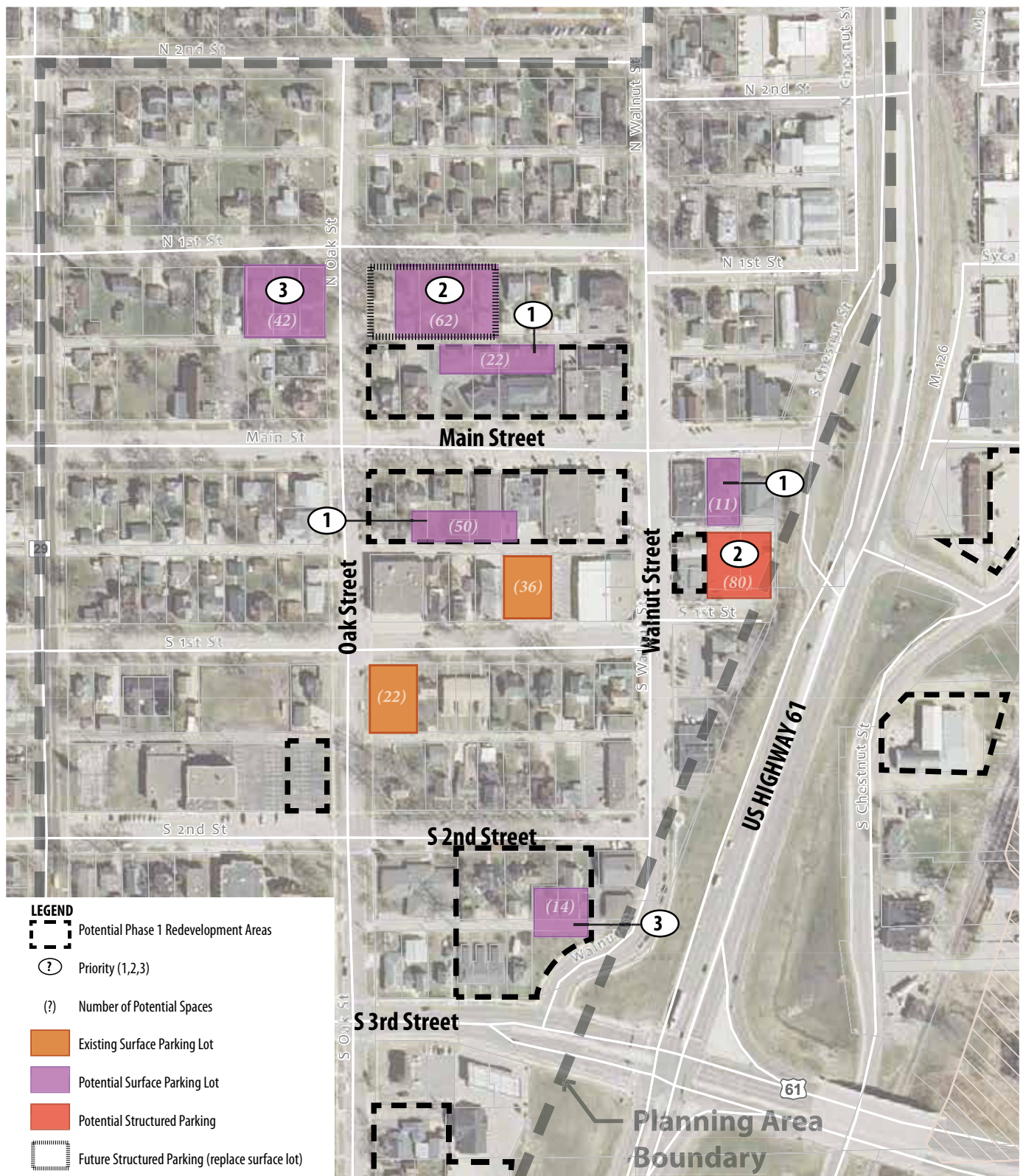
Current Standards

- » **Commercial:** 1 space per 625 SF (note: stated as "4 spaces per 2,500 SF")
- » **Residential:** 2 spaces per unit

Proposed Standards

- » **Commercial:**
 - » First Floor: 1 space per 500 SF
 - » Upper Floors / Basement: 1 space per 1,000 SF
 - » Public Parking Credit: The requirement for on-site commercial parking may be reduced by the total of all adjacent street parking and up to 25% of the public parking lot spaces in lots within 200 feet of the commercial use parcel.
- » **Residential:** 1 covered space per unit, on-site, plus evidence of the availability of off-street public or private parking within 500 feet of the building for every additional bedroom (example: 24 two-bedroom units would require 24 covered spaces on-site and the availability of 24 off-street parking spaces).

Potential Parking Facility Locations



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CATALYTIC PROJECTS

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

La Crescent is not known for its downtown architecture. While it has some attractive buildings from various eras, it also has some low-value structures with limited character that would not be missed if replaced. One of the purposes of this Downtown Vision Plan is to identify possible redevelopment sites and propose new uses for those sites.

The Comprehensive Plan includes the following goals, objective and strategies intended to guide new development. These ideas seek for La Crescent what all successful downtowns have: a mix of uses that includes residential units and strong urban design characteristics that encourage walking and outdoor seating.

Goal 1

New development on Main Street and Walnut Street in the Downtown Core will have urban character appropriate to La Crescent.

Strategies

1.1. Most new buildings in these locations will be built to the sidewalk and all within 10' of the sidewalk.

1.2. New buildings in these locations will generally be at least 24' tall on all sides, and will include at least two functional stories.

1.3. All new buildings and significant renovations of existing buildings will have a large percentage of clear glass windows along the ground floor street façade to increase visual connections to and from the street.

1.4. There will be no off-street surface parking within 50' of an intersection and no parking that is closer to the street than the building.

1.5. Allow for unique, placemaking features in private development, such as unique signage or landscaping.

Goal 3

The downtown district will be apparent and accessible to visitors from all directions.

Objective

New downtown buildings will be visible from the highway due to their height.

Goal 4

Downtown activity and retail/service market demand will be increased through the development of more residential units in the downtown area.

Strategies

4.1. Encourage upper story apartment units in some new buildings in the Downtown Core (especially on Main and Walnut).

4.2. Encourage new multi-unit buildings in a variety of formats (flats, townhomes) and serving a variety of market needs (senior housing, efficiencies, three-bedrooms) constructed in the Downtown Fringe and Downtown Mixed Residential areas.

4.3. New mixed use buildings downtown may be supported by the use of Tax Incremental Financing (TIF), tax abatement, grant funding or other development incentives.

Catalytic Redevelopment Sites

The map at right indicates a series of redevelopment opportunities throughout the downtown area. Factors considered in these designations included current property value, the character of existing buildings, and the prominence and visibility of the site. For some of these sites this plan includes illustrations of what redevelopment could look like, to help people visualize and begin adjusting to the idea of more intensive uses on some of these sites before developers bring forward specific proposals.

This list is in no way definitive - some of these sites might not redevelop, while others not identified here could, depending on property owner and developer interest. The City should consider an active role to help redevelop those sites that require the aggregation of multiple small parcels to make redevelopment possible, including C, H, and M.

This map identifies several sites with a dashed outline - these are sites considered for a new municipal building. As described in the Civic Center section of this plan, the preferred location is the southeast corner of Main St. and Oak St. (H).

It should be noted that some of the new buildings envisioned in this plan would be taller than two stories, up to five stories in height. These buildings could change views of the surrounding bluffs from some nearby properties. While such changes are a natural and inevitable result of infill development, it remains important to preserve viewsheds at the end of streets.

For development along Main St. and Walnut St., a contiguous street wall without gaps for parking is important to the character of the downtown area.



...we seek a mix of uses and strong urban design that encourages walking and outdoor seating...

Catalytic Redevelopment Site "C"



Advantages

- » Improves the appearance and utilization of a highly visible site
- » This is one of the City's best opportunities for new highway commercial use

Disadvantages

- » Requires the removal of four homes, including one on the south side of N. 3rd St. to replace parking for the for the KC Professional Center
- » Will increase commercial activity and traffic near adjacent homes

This site, at the corner of Hwy 14/61 and N. 4th St., is a prime opportunity for a new highway commercial use. A traffic signal at that intersection is strongly recommended, both to improve safety and to further strengthen the appeal of this site to retailers. The illustration suggests a grocery store totaling 18,000 SF. Potential uses include:

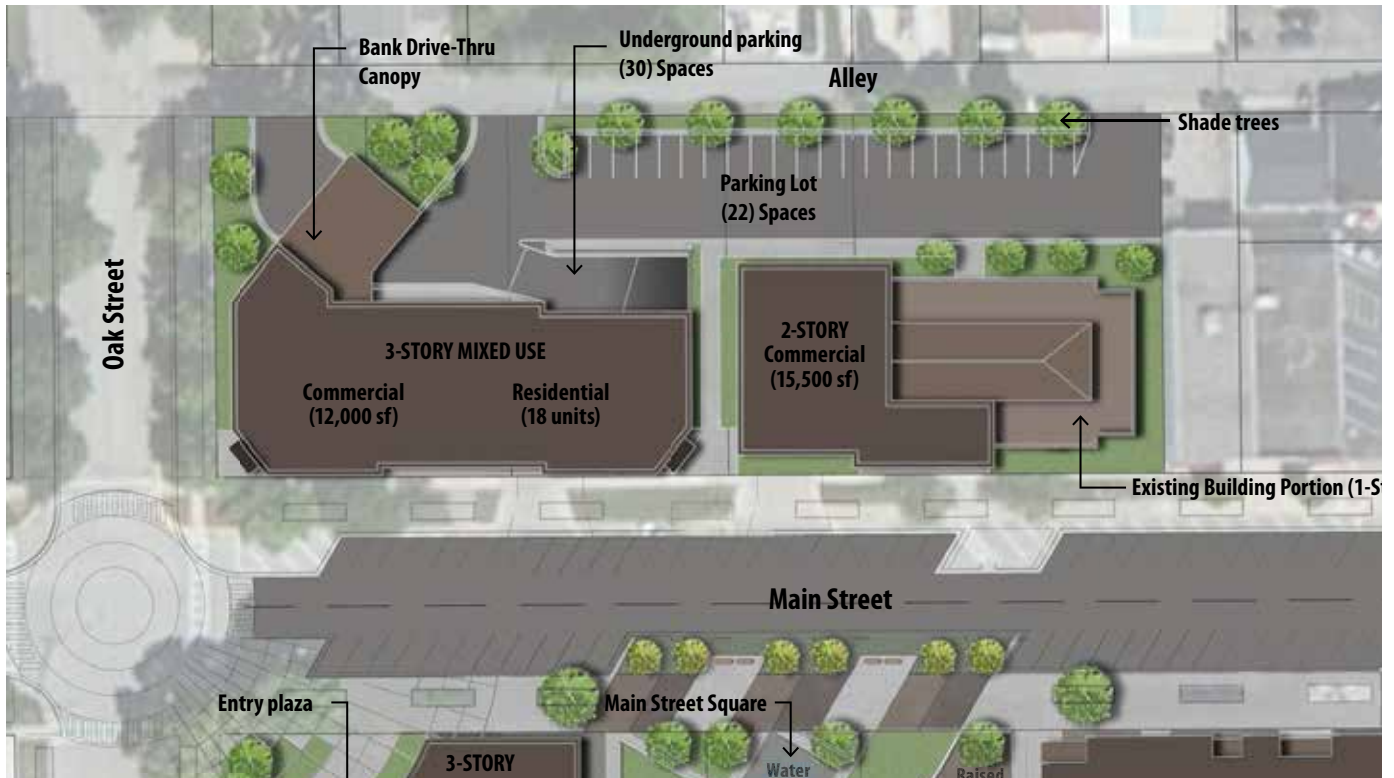
- » Grocery Store (60% larger than current Quillin's building)
- » Bowling Alley
- » Health Club
- » Small Shopping Center with Sit-down Restaurant, Fast Food Restaurant and/or (Specialty) Retail

Representative Photo



People's Food Co-op

Catalytic Redevelopment Site "D/E"

**Advantages**

- » The site is currently underutilized in a downtown setting, requires the removal of one home/small commercial building
- » Multistory development here would help to establish this as an important downtown intersection

Disadvantages

- » As a retail site, it is a bit separated from existing downtown retailers, which are mostly on Walnut St.

This site along the north side of Main St., east of Oak St., is proposed as a new mixed-use development with ground floor retail and upper floor residential. The new building on the corner is proposed as a three-story structure with 18 residential units, 12,000 SF of commercial space and underground parking for

residents. This project would include the removal of the drive-through on what is currently Merchants Bank, and adaptive re-use of that building. Potential first floor uses include:

- » Bank, Dry Cleaner, Coffee Shop, Bakery, etc. (use of canopy shown along the alley)
- » Professional Offices (e.g., accounting, financial advisor, realtor, dental, etc.)
- » (Specialty) Retail

The re-use of the Merchant Bank is shown with a two-story addition bringing the total commercial building to 15,500 SF. As a part of this re-use project, it is recommended the windows be replaced to provide greater visual connection to the street. Potential uses include:

- » Professional Offices (e.g., accounting, financial advisor, realtor, dental, etc.)
- » Coffee Shop, Deli, Bakery, etc.

Representative Photos



3-Story Mixed Use Building



Remodel & Addition of Merchants Bank Building

Catalytic Redevelopment Site “H”



Advantages

- » This location offers the opportunity to directly connect to the nearby La Crescent Community Building, enabling elevator access to the upper meeting room in that facility.
- » This site would establish the adjoining intersection as important and expand the downtown somewhat.

Disadvantages

- » Requires the removal of two homes, a gift shop and the existing library

The proposed La Crescent Municipal Building would be three stories in height, about 26,400 SF in floor area, and include City Hall, Police Department and Library uses. It could also lease space to other

public entities (e.g., the local field office for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers) and for a first floor commercial use (though only if that space is not constructed with public bonding). The site would also feature surface parking, both for users of this building and downtown parking needs in general. Potential first floor uses include:

- » Coffee Shop, Deli, Bakery, etc.

Though not illustrated above, alternative design ideas include closure of the west end of the alley, and direct connection of the two civic buildings at ground level, and a solar panel canopy in the parking median.

When pursuing development of this site, the City should consider

Representative Photo



Signature “Municipal” Building with corner plaza space. The proposed building might have this approximate shape, but would be shorter (3 stories) and incorporate larger windows than this example photo.

its relationship to the intersection of Oak St. and Main St., and should advocate for private investment and redevelopment on the other three corners to further enhance this as an important place in La Crescent.



Main Street after streetscaping and redevelopment investments, as seen from Oak Street

The image above portrays a new Municipal Building and Main Street streetscaping as it could become, viewed from north side of Main Street in the Oak Street crosswalk, looking east. The image at left is that same view today.

This building is an opportunity to showcase sustainable design, including energy-efficient envelope and lighting, water-efficient fixtures, on-site solar power generation, etc.



Main Street today, looking east from Oak Street

Catalytic Redevelopment Site “I”



Advantages

- » This location offers a reasonably large lot at the City's most important downtown intersection. Redevelopment in this fashion would have an immediate impact on how the downtown is perceived.
- » The site adjoins the proposed "Main Street Square" public green space
- » Could set the tone for other projects in the downtown, in terms of height, urban character, design quality, etc.

Disadvantages

- » Requires the relocation of Quillin's grocery store

This site at the corner of Main St. and Walnut St., is the current site of Quillin's grocery store. While not

intended to displace that use, the site is viewed as one of the City's best opportunities to transform the downtown, by replacing a plain, single-story structure with few windows and front yard parking with a multistory, mixed use building. The new building is illustrated as a three-story structure with 26 residential units, about 15,000 SF of commercial space and underground parking for residents. Potential first floor uses include:

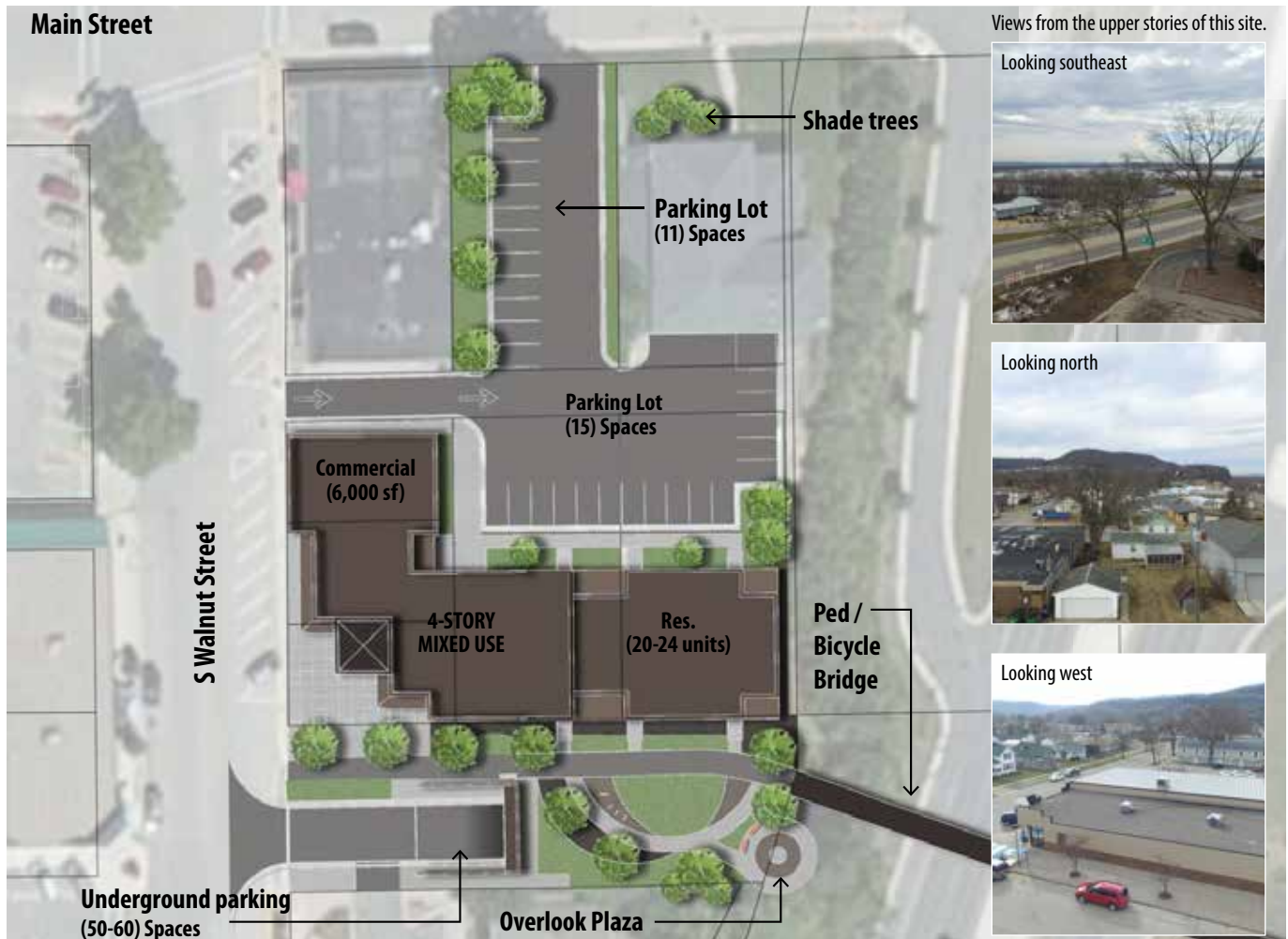
- » Restaurant, Coffee Shop, Bakery, Deli, Smoothie Bar, etc.
- » Professional Offices (e.g., accounting, financial advisor, realtor, dental, etc.)
- » Barber Shop, Beauty Shop, etc.
- » (Specialty) Retail

Representative Photo



3-Story Mixed Use Building

Catalytic Redevelopment Site "J"

**Advantages**

- » Great visibility from highway
- » Great views of the river valley and bluffs
- » Adjacent to the planned pedestrian bridge

Disadvantages

- » Underground parking here is essential to the best use of this site (though public parking would support the trailhead function at this location)

This project would replace single story office and laundromat buildings with multi-story, mixed use

development. It would also replace a home on Main St. with parking, and it would provide underground public parking. The building, as illustrated, is four stories tall and includes about 24 residential units and 6,000 SF of commercial space. The underground parking would offer 50-60 spaces, over half of which would be available for public use. Potential first floor uses include:

- » Coffee Shop, Bakery, Deli, Smoothie Bar, etc.
- » Barber Shop, Beauty Shop, etc.
- » (Specialty) Retail

For this site, or any other adjoining Hwy 14/61, new construction will be designed to be attractive from the highway.

Representative Photo

4-Story Mixed Use Building

Catalytic Redevelopment Site “M”



Advantages

- » Would establish a strong “downtown” presence and point of entry at S. 3rd St.
- » Excellent visibility and traffic flows for retail.

Disadvantages

- » Requires the removal of homes, including several of good quality.

Would increase traffic somewhat in the alley and on S. 2nd St. This project would replace four homes

and a three-unit apartment building with a multistory, mixed use building. The building, as illustrated, is four stories tall and includes about 30 residential units, 15,000 SF of commercial space, and underground parking for residents. Potential first floor uses include:

- » Restaurant, Coffee Shop, Bakery, Deli, Smoothie Bar, etc.
- » Professional Offices (e.g., accounting, financial advisor, realtor, dental, etc.)
- » Barber Shop, Beauty Shop, etc.
- » (Specialty) Retail

Representative Photo



4-Story Mixed Use Building

Catalytic Redevelopment Site "O"



NOTE: Redevelopment of the current school site is illustrated, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. If the school is relocated, this site should be residential with a focus on family housing.

While the La Crescent-Hokah School District has no immediate plans to build a new elementary school either on the current site or elsewhere, the possibility of selling this site was raised during the comprehensive planning process in 2016. The adopted Comprehensive Plan indicates that this site should feature family housing. Family housing is the preferred use because it is in high demand in the City, and because commercial use

here would unnecessarily disperse and dilute that use while efforts are underway to draw new commercial uses downtown.

The emphasis for new residential should be a mix of compact formats geared toward families, including single family, duplex and row housing options. This illustration shows the use of alleys to enable rear garages and narrow single family lots, about 45 feet wide.

Representative Photo



Neighborhood homes with garage access from an alley

ACTION PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION

An important theme in the La Crescent Comprehensive Plan, reinforced in this Downtown Vision Plan, is the need for City government to be proactive in the pursuit of investment in the downtown area. La Crescent is part of a growing metro area, with many social and economic ties to Wisconsin communities across the river. But those ties and the growth of the larger region will not automatically translate into growth in La Crescent. With its many physical constraints (bluffs, wetlands, highways), the

City's development opportunities are mostly redevelopment opportunities, and redevelopment is not easy. The City will need to take an active role, through public investment in infrastructure and development incentives, to get the private sector excited about the growth of downtown La Crescent. It may even prove necessary for the City to buy sites and directly facilitate redevelopment. This Action Plan proposes specific, proactive City efforts. Though numbered, no particular order or priority is intended.

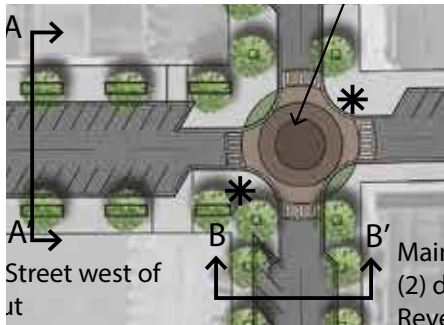
...the City will take an active role to get the private sector excited about the growth of downtown La Crescent...



ACTION #1

Proceed with planning and design of a new Municipal Building

This is a needed project, due to the space constraints and poor quality of the existing City Hall, and it is a prime opportunity to lead by example in the pursuit of downtown investment

**ACTION #2**

Incorporate the downtown streetscape improvements into the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Start planning now for when and how to tackle these costs. The rebuild of Main Street should wait for some of the redevelopment to occur first, but improvements to Oak St. could happen soon.

**ACTION #3**

Install a demonstration of back-in angle parking on Main Street.

While there is apparent enthusiasm for this idea, few people have direct experience with it. Re-stripe a section of angle parking near City Hall and install signs with instructions for use.

**ACTION #4**

Complete the bike/pedestrian bridge over Hwy 14/61

When designing this bridge, consider its role as a gateway to La Crescent, both across the bridge and under it. While the full plaza space at the "take-off" may need to wait, install an info kiosk right away.

**ACTION #5**

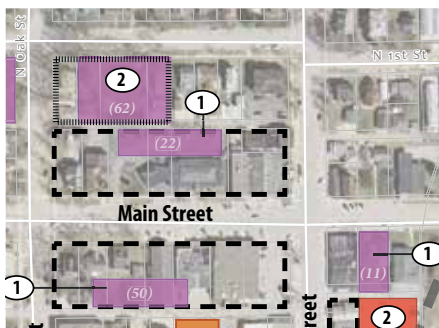
Begin acquiring parcels on sites C, G and L

Redevelopment and intersection improvements at N. 4th St. and Hwy 14/61, including the realignment of N. Chestnut St., require land assembly. As opportunities arise, acquire those parcels.

**ACTION #6**

Encourage private boosters to begin work on a public art collection

One piece of public art is a good start, three pieces are a collection, eight could change how people feel about La Crescent. Encourage a current or new group to start working on this.

**ACTION #7**

Begin acquiring parcels for additional City parking lots, as available.

Watch for opportunities to acquire parcels in proposed parking locations, to prepare for future need, especially on N. 1st. St.

**ACTION #8**

Amend the zoning ordinance

The current ordinance requires too much on-site parking and doesn't allow enough residential units. Discuss the residential densities and parking suggestions in this plan and amend the ordinance.

**ACTION #9**

Promote financial incentives for new development

Good downtown redevelopment will likely require financial assistance. The City should identify the methods it is willing to use (e.g. TIF, tax abatement) and the purposes (e.g. mixed use, underground parking).

**ACTION #10**

Feature the downtown in community branding and marketing

The City needs to promote itself within the region, through various media and methods, as a great place to live. Downtown living, dining and trailhead opportunities should be highlighted.

**ACTION #11**

Sit down with existing local businesses each year to support their growth and success

Business owners need to know that the City supports their success, and the City should know about conditions that may prevent that success, especially if it is something within the City's control.

**ACTION #12**

Review and discuss this plan and commit to specific actions in annual plans

All key stakeholders should declare publicly their action commitment in their annual plans to implement this vision, including the Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, City Council and City Staff.

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